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DESCRIPTION**APPARATUS FOR CHECKING THE DIAMETER OF CRANKPINS ROTATING
WITH AN ORBITAL MOTION**

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Technical Field

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10 The present invention relates to an apparatus for checking
the diameter of crankpins rotating with an orbital motion
about a geometrical axis, in the course of the machining in
a numerical control grinding machine including a worktable,
defining said geometrical axis, and a grinding-wheel slide
with a reference device for cooperating with the crankpin
to be checked, a measuring device, movable with the
15 reference device, and a support device for supporting the
reference device and the measuring device, the support
device having a support element, a first coupling element
coupled to the support element so as to rotate about a
first axis of rotation parallel to said geometrical axis,
20 and a second coupling element carrying the reference device
and coupled, in a movable way, to the first coupling
element.

Background Art

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US-A-4637144 discloses an apparatus for checking the
diameter of crankpins orbiting about a geometrical axis, in
the course of the machining in a grinding machine. The
apparatus is supported by a support fixed to the worktable
30 of the grinding machine, or by a support affixed to the bed
of the grinding machine, or by a longitudinal slide
arranged on the worktable.

The apparatus comprises a reference device, Vee-shaped or
of another type, for cooperating with the crankpin to be
checked, a measuring head fixed to the reference device and
35 provided with two movable arms carrying feelers for
contacting diametrically opposite points of the crankpin, a

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cylinder and piston device, and a coupling device between the cylinder and the support of the apparatus. The reference device is supported by the piston rod and thus is movable along the geometric axis of the cylinder. Moreover, 5 the reference device can rotate, with the cylinder, about an axis of rotation defined by the coupling device and parallel to the geometric axis whereabout the crankpin rotates. The cylinder and piston device comprises a spring, that acts on the piston so as to urge the reference device 10 towards the crankpin to be checked, and a hydraulic or pneumatically actuated device for displacing the piston towards a rest position, in opposition to the force of the spring. In the course of the checking operation, the apparatus is located, with respect to the workpiece, 15 substantially at the opposite side with respect to the one where the grinding wheel is located.

The apparatus and its applications in a grinding machine, described in the formerly mentioned patent, are subject to some inconveniences like considerable layout dimensions, in 20 particular in a transversal direction, high forces of inertia, the impossibility of displacing in an automatic way the reference device from the rest position to the measuring position while the piece (crankshaft) is rotating. These inconveniences are due to both the 25 structure of the apparatus and its application in the machine. All the applications described in the patent involve, in the course of the measurement taking, that the reference device describes a trajectory basically corresponding to the orbital motion of the crankpin.

30 U.S. patent No. US-A-4351115 discloses a machine for the dimensional checking of a crankshaft, comprising devices for checking the crankpins in the course of their orbital motion about the main geometrical axis of the crankshaft. Each of these checking devices comprises a guide and 35 reference device, supported by the machine frame, by means of two arms, rotating reciprocally and with respect to the frame, about two axes of rotation parallel to the

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geometrical axis of the orbital motion. This machine and its associated checking devices are not suitable for checking during the machining operation, among other things owing to the fact that the guide and reference devices describe trajectories that essentially correspond to the orbital motion of the associated crankpin, the speed of the orbital motion is considerably lower with respect to that occurring in the course of the machining in a crankpin grinding machine and the displacement of the checking devices from a rest position to an operating condition occurs when the crankshaft is not rotating.

U.S. patent No. US-A-3386178 discloses an apparatus, for checking the diameter of cylindrical workpieces, rotating about their geometrical axis, in the course of the machining in a grinding machine. The apparatus comprises two arms, rotating reciprocally and with respect to the grinding-wheel slide. One of the arms supports two reference elements or fixed (with respect to the arm) feelers for contacting the surface of the rotating workpiece and a movable stem, with a feeler for contacting the workpiece and an opposite end for cooperating with the movable element of a clock comparator. The apparatus is manually displaced from a rest position to a measuring condition, and vice versa. The grinding machine cannot machine workpieces rotating with an orbital motion, nor is the measuring apparatus suitable for a similar type of application.

Disclosure of the Invention

Object of the present invention is to provide an apparatus for the metrological checking of crankpins rotating with an orbital motion, in the course of a grinding operation, or in a similar one, that can provide good metrological performance, high reliability and small forces of inertia. This problem is solved by a measuring apparatus of the hereinbefore mentioned type, wherein the second coupling

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element is coupled to the first coupling element in such a way as to rotate with respect to it about a second axis of rotation parallel to said geometrical axis, the support element is fixed to the grinding-wheel slide and there are
5 foreseen a guide device, associated with the reference device, for guiding the arrangement of the reference device on the crankpin in the course of the orbital motion and a control device for enabling the apparatus to displace in an automatic way from a rest position to a checking condition,
10 and vice versa.

Preferably, in the rest position, the reference device is arranged substantially above those positions that, in the grinding machine, are assumed by the geometrical axis of the crankpin to be checked and in the course of the
15 displacement towards the operating condition it enters into engagement with the crankpin, guided by the guide device, describing a trajectory with a prevailing vertical component.

Preferably, the reference device is substantially a Vee-shaped device.
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Preferably, the guide device defines a shaped guiding surface that is aligned with a surface of the reference device.

According to another characteristic, the control device can
25 be advantageously achieved by means of a double-acting cylinder, for example of the hydraulic type.

According to a further characteristic, the apparatus is made so that, in the operating condition, the reference device rests on the crankpin substantially owing to the
30 forces of gravity, the values of which are appropriately predetermined by a suitable arrangement and entity of the weights of the component parts.

Still further aspects of the invention regard, among other things, manufacturing features for enabling the checking of
35 the diameter of the crankpins while avoiding any interferences with the lubrication holes present in the crankpins and for checking crankshafts with even

considerably different nominal dimensions, and safety devices for preventing any collisions or unwanted and/or dangerous motions.

5 The characteristics of the apparatus and of its application in the grinding machine enable to combine remarkable functionality with relatively low costs and to obtain an arrangement of the apparatus that facilitates the loading and the unloading of the crankshafts and limits the layout dimensions in the areas surrounding the more critical
10 elements of the grinding machine and the accessory devices, like the workpiece loading/unloading devices.

Brief Description of the Drawings

15 The invention is now described in more detail with reference to the enclosed drawings, showing a preferred embodiment by way of illustration and not of limitation. In said drawings:

figure 1 is a lateral view of a measuring apparatus
20 mounted on the grinding-wheel slide of a grinding machine for crankshafts, in the highest position that the apparatus reaches during the grinding of a crankpin rotating with an orbital motion about the main axis of the crankshaft;

figure 2 is a similar view as that of figure 1,
25 wherein the apparatus is in the lowest possible position it reaches in the course of the grinding of the crankpin;

figure 3 is a lateral view of the apparatus shown in figures 1 and 2 under a condition whereby the grinding machine numerical control has commanded a withdrawal of the
30 grinding wheel for emergency reasons;

figure 4 is a lateral view showing the apparatus of figures 1-3 in the rest position;

figure 5 is a partial front view of the apparatus
35 mounted on the grinding-wheel slide of the grinding machine;

figure 6 shows a detail of the measuring device of the apparatus for the comparative measurement of the diameter

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of a crankpin so as to avoid interferences with the lubrication hole in the crankpin;

figure 7 is a partially cross-sectional view of the measuring system of the apparatus; and

5 , figure 8 is a lateral view of a measuring apparatus including some modifications with respect to the apparatus of figures 1 to 5, in the same position shown in figure 1.

Best Mode for Carrying Out the Invention

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With reference to figure 1, the grinding-wheel slide 1 of a computer numerical control ("CNC") grinding machine for grinding crankshafts supports a spindle 2 that defines the axis of rotation 3 of grinding wheel 4. Above spindle 2 the grinding-wheel slide 1 carries a support device including a support element 5 that, by means of a rotation pin 6, with preloaded bearings -not shown-, defining a first axis of rotation 7 parallel to the axis of rotation 3 of grinding wheel 4 and to the axis of rotation 8 of the crankshaft, supports a first rotating, coupling, element 9. The axis of rotation 7 substantially lies in a vertical plane wherein the axis of rotation 3 of grinding wheel 4 lies, above the axis of rotation 3 of grinding wheel 4 and below the upper periphery of the grinding wheel. In turn, coupling element 9, by means of a rotation pin 10, with preloaded bearings - not shown-, defining a second axis of rotation 11 parallel to the axis of rotation 3 of grinding wheel 4 and to the axis of rotation 8 of the crankshaft, supports a second rotating, coupling element 12. At the free end of the coupling element 12 there is coupled, fixedly or - as shown in the figures - in an adjustable way, by means of a tie coupling 13 with an associated locking/unlocking knob, a tubular guide casing 15 wherein there can axially translate a transmission rod 16 carrying a feeler 17 for contacting the surface of the crankpin 18 to be checked. The displacements of rod 16 are detected by a measuring device, as hereinafter disclosed. At the lower end of the tubular

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guide casing 15 there is fixed a support block 19 supporting a reference device 20, Vee-shaped, adapted for engaging the surface of the crankpin 18 to be checked, by virtue of the rotations allowed by pins 6 and 10. The transmission rod 16 is movable along the bisecting line of the Vee-shaped reference device 20.

The support block 19 further supports a guide device 21, that, according to the following more detailed description, serves to guide the reference device 20 to engage crankpin 18 and maintain contact with the crankpin while the reference device 20 moves away from the crankpin, for limiting the rotation of the first 9 and of the second 12 coupling elements about the axes of rotation 7, 11 defined by pins 6 and 10. The guide device 21 consists of a metal rod 22 suitably bent in order to have a guide portion that can cooperate with crankpin 18.

The crankshaft to be checked is positioned on the worktable 23, between a spindle and a tailstock, not shown, that define the axis of rotation 8, coincident with the main geometrical axis of the crankshaft. As a consequence, crankpin 18 performs an orbital motion about axis 8. Reference number 18' indicates the upper position that the crankpin reaches, whereas reference number 18'' indicates the crankpin lower position. Figures 1 and 2 show the positions of the measuring apparatus when the crankpin reaches the upper position 18' and the lower one 18'', respectively. Even though crankpin 18 rotates eccentrically about axis 8, by describing a circular trajectory, the trajectory of the pin with respect to the grinding-wheel slide 1 can be represented, substantially, by an arc shown with a dashed line and indicated by reference number 25. Thus, reference device 20 describes a similar trajectory, with a reciprocating motion from up to down and vice versa and at a frequency -of some tens of revolutions per minute- equal to that of the orbital motion of crankpin 18. This is due to the fact that the checking apparatus is carried by the grinding-wheel slide 1 that, in modern numerical

control grinding machines, machines the crankpins, while they rotate in an orbital motion, by "tracking" the pins so as to keep the grinding wheel in contact with the surface to be ground. Obviously, there is added, to the transversal "tracking" motion, a feed motion for the stock removal. Thus, it is understood that the displacements of the elements forming the checking apparatus involve relatively small forces of inertia, to the advantage of the metrological performance, limited wear and reliability of the apparatus.

As known, modern grinding machines are equipped with a plurality of sensors for detecting various parameters and information, on the ground of which the numerical control of the machine suitably operates. In the event of an emergency, the numerical control can control the grinding wheel to immediately withdraw from the workpiece. Figure 3 shows the position of the checking apparatus further to the withdrawal of the grinding-wheel slide 1 for emergency reasons. It is understood that in the course of the emergency withdrawal reference device 20 disengages from crankpin 18 and the latter enters into contact with the guide device 21, remaining in contact with it even at the end of the withdrawal of grinding-wheel slide 1. In this way the rotations of the coupling elements 9 and 12 about the axes of rotation 7 and 11 are limited and the checking apparatus is prevented from undertaking dangerous positions.

The checking apparatus shown in figures 1 to 5 comprises a counterweight 27, coupled to element 9, in such a way that it is prevalently arranged at the opposite side of the latter with respect to pin 6, and a control device comprising a double-acting cylinder 28, for example of the hydraulic type. Cylinder 28 is supported by grinding-wheel slide 1 and comprises a rod 29, coupled to the piston of the cylinder, carrying at the free end a cap 30. When cylinder 28 is activated for displacing the piston and the rod 29 towards the right (with reference to figure 1), cap

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30 contacts an abutment fixed to counterweight 27 and causes the displacement of the checking apparatus in the rest position shown in figure 4, according to which reference device 20 is arranged above the geometrical axis 8 and the crankpin upper position 18', with the bisecting line of the Vee substantially arranged in vertical direction. During this displacement, an abutting surface, fixed to the coupling element 12, enters into contact with a positive stop element 32, fixed to the coupling element 9, thus defining a minimum value of the angle formed between the two coupling elements 9 and 12, for the purpose of both preventing interferences with devices of the grinding machine and defining a rest position for enabling the displacing of the apparatus to the checking position to occur in the best possible way. The retraction of the checking apparatus to the rest position is normally controlled by the grinding machine numerical control when, on the ground of the measuring signal of the checking apparatus, it is detected that crankpin 18 has reached the required (diametral) dimension. Thereafter, the machining of other parts of the crankshaft takes place, or -in the event the machining of the crankshaft has been completed- the piece is unloaded, manually or automatically, and a new piece is loaded on worktable 23.

When a new crankpin has to be machined, it is brought in front of grinding wheel 4, usually by displacing the worktable 23 (in the event of a grinding machine with a single grinding wheel), and the checking apparatus moves to the measuring position. This occurs by controlling, by means of the grinding machine numerical control, cylinder 28 so that rod 29 is retracted. Thus, cap 30 disengages from the abutment of counterweight 27 and, through rotation of the coupling elements 9, 12, at first only about the axis of rotation 6 and thereafter also about the axis of rotation 11, due to the specific weight of the components of the checking apparatus, support block 19 approaches, by describing a trajectory with a mainly vertical component,

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crankpin 18, that in the meanwhile moves according to its orbital trajectory. Depending on the instantaneous position of the crankpin 18, the initial contact can occur by means of the guide device 21 or directly by means of the reference device 20. In any case, the correct cooperation between crankpin 18 and reference device 20 is rapidly achieved. This cooperation is maintained in the course of the checking phase by virtue of the displacements of the coupling elements 9, 12, caused by the force of gravity and by the thrust of crankpin 18, in opposition to the force of gravity of the elements of the checking apparatus. The structure of the apparatus is such that each of the sides of the Vee of the reference device 20 applies to crankpin 18 a force, due to gravity, of about one kilogram.

In some cases, the retraction of the rod 29 may be controlled so that the approaching movement of the support block 19 be temporarily stopped in correspondence of a position close to the trajectory 25, but slightly apart from the upper position 18' of the crankpin 18. The full retraction of rod 29 is then controlled by the numerical control when the crankpin 18 is going to reach its upper position 18' so that the crankpin 18 dynamically engages the guide device 21 substantially in correspondence of such upper position 18'. This proceeding allows to have a very low mutual speed between the parts that come into engagement with each other (the guide device 21 and the crankpin 18), so providing a very soft impact between them. The coupling elements 9 and 12 are basically linear arms with geometric axes lying in transversal planes with respect to the axis of rotation 8 of the crankshaft and to the axis of rotation 3 of grinding wheel 4. However, as shown in figure 5, wherein there is also shown a crankshaft 34, in order to avoid any interferences with elements and devices of the grinding machine, in particular with tube 35, not shown in figure 5, that directs, by means of a nozzle, coolant towards the surface being machined, the coupling elements 9 and 12 comprise portions 36 and 37

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extending in a longitudinal direction and portions offset in different transversal planes.

Figures 6 and 7 show some details of the measuring device of the apparatus. In figure 6 there is shown a crankpin 18 featuring in the central part, as usual, a lubrication hole 38. In order to avoid any interferences with the lubrication hole 38, feeler 17 is offset with respect to the intermediate cross-section of pin 18, by means of a transversal portion 40 of the transmission rod 16.

The axial displacements of the transmission rod 16 with respect to a reference position are detected by means of a measurement transducer, fixed to the tubular casing 15, for example a "cartridge" head 41 with a feeler 42 contacting an abutting surface formed in a second transversal portion 43 of the transmission rod 16. In this way, feeler 17 and measuring head 41 along with feeler 42 are kept aligned along a measurement axis. As shown in figure 7, too, the axial displacement of the transmission rod 16 is guided by two bushings 44 and 45, arranged between casing 15 and rod 16. A metal bellows 46, that is stiff with respect to torsional forces, and has its ends fixed to rod 16 and to casing 15, respectively, accomplishes the dual function of preventing rod 16 from rotating with respect to casing 15 (thus preventing feeler 17 from undertaking improper positions) and sealing the lower end of casing 15, whereto the coolant delivered by the nozzle of tube 35, is directed.

The support block 19 is secured to the guide casing 15 by means of screws 50 passing through slots 51 and supports the reference device 20, consisting of two elements 52, 53 with sloping surfaces, whereto there are secured two bars 54, 55. In the area 57, the guide tubular casing 15 is secured to the free end of the coupling element 12, for example, as hereinbefore mentioned, by means of a tie coupling 13, not shown in figure 7. The tie coupling 13 enables rough axial adjustments, in the direction of the bisecting line of the Vee defined by bars 54, 55, in order

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to ensure that the two bars 54, 55 and feeler 17 contact crankpin 18. The rest position of feeler 17 can be adjusted by means of screws 50 and slots 51.

A reference device 20 and the associated guide device 21, not shown in figure 7, cover a predetermined measuring range. In order to change the measuring range, support block 19 is replaced with another block 19 carrying the appropriate reference device 20 and guide device 21.

There is also foreseen, as schematically shown in figure 5, a proximity sensor 60 adapted for detecting the presence of the crankshaft 34 in the machining position. Sensor 60 is connected to the computer numerical control 61 of the grinding machine. When there is no signal monitoring the presence of a workpiece, the numerical control 61 prevents the retraction of rod 29 of cylinder 28 and thus the checking apparatus cannot displace from the rest position.

There are other proximity sensors 62 and 63, shown in figures 2 and 4, also connected to the computer numerical control 61, for detecting, depending on the position of cap 30, the rest position (figure 4) and the measuring condition (figure 2) of the apparatus, respectively.

Figure 8 shows a checking apparatus that, apart from the counterweight 27, includes all the features that have been described with reference to figures 1 to 7.

Additionally, the apparatus of figure 8 includes an overhang 70, rigidly fixed to the support element 5, an arm 71, connected at one end to element 9, an abutment with an idle wheel 72 coupled to the free end of arm 71, and a coil return spring 73 joined to the overhang 70 and the arm 71.

In this case, when cylinder 28 is activated for displacing the piston and the rod 29 towards the right (with reference to the figure), cap 30 pushes against the idle wheel 72 to displace the checking apparatus to a rest position (substantially corresponding to the one shown in figure 4).

The spring 73, that, owing to its connections, is substantially arranged between the support element 5 and the first coupling element 9, has a statical

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counterbalancing effect, similar to the one of the counterweight 27 of figures 1-5, allowing to establish a proper engagement force between the Vee reference device 20 and the crankpin 18 to be checked.

5 When, in order to permit displacement of the apparatus to the checking condition, rod 29 is retracted, and cap 30 disengages from the abutment, or idle wheel 72, support block 19 approaches the crankpin 18 through rotation of the coupling elements 9, 12, and the apparatus operates as
10 described hereinabove with reference to figures 1 to 5. The cooperation between crankpin 18 and reference device 20 is maintained, as above described, owing to the displacements of the components caused by the force of gravity.

The action of the coil spring 73, the stretching of which
15 increases with the lowering of the support block 19, partially and dynamically counterbalances the forces due to the inertia of the moving parts of the checking apparatus following the displacements of the crankpin 18.

In such a way, it is possible, for example, to avoid
20 overstresses between the reference device 20 and the crankpin 18, in correspondence of the lower position 18'', that might tend to move apart the sides of the Vee of the reference device 20. On the other side, since during the raising movement of the apparatus (due to rotation of the
25 crankpin towards the upper position 18') the pulling action of the spring 73 decreases, the inertial forces tending, in correspondence of the upper position 18', to release the engagement between the Vee reference device 20 and the crankpin 18, can be properly counterbalanced. In the latter
30 case, it is pointed out that the counterbalancing action is obtained, by means of the spring 73, through a decreasing of its pulling action. In other words, the coil spring 73 does not cause any pressure between the reference device 20 and the crankpin 18, that mutually cooperate, as above
35 mentioned, just owing to the force of gravity.

It is possible to equip one of the above described checking apparatuses with further feelers, associated transmission

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rods and measurement transducers for detecting further diameters and other dimensions and/or geometrical or shape characteristics of the crankpin being machined. The Vee-shaped reference device 20 can be replaced with reference devices of a different type.

5 It is also possible to arrange the axis of rotation 7 in a different position with respect to what is above described and shown in the drawing figures, i.e. on a different vertical plane and in a different vertical position.

10 It is obvious that in a multiwheel grinding machine simultaneously machining a plurality of crankpins there can be foreseen just as many checking apparatuses.

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